

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	:	
	:	
v.	:	1:24CR196-1
	:	
MANUEL MASSAS	:	

FACTUAL BASIS

NOW COME the United States of America, by and through Sandra J. Hairston, United States Attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina, and as a factual basis under Rule 11, Fed. R. Crim. P., states the following:

On January 7, 2022, at approximately 10:49 a.m., an individual later identified as Manuel Massas (MASSAS) entered the First Horizon Bank at 3151 Peters Creek Parkway in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (Robbery 1). MASSAS was dressed in dark clothing, pink latex gloves, and a black face mask and sunglasses that concealed the entirety of his face. He carried a black bookbag and brandished a black semi-automatic handgun.

MASSAS first pointed the gun at the bank security officer, then at the tellers, and demanded money. The tellers gave him approximately \$2,500 from the registers but MASSAS demanded more money from the bank's safe. The safe required an additional security code so MASSAS demanded another employee come out from one of the bank offices to open the safe. With the

additional \$3,600 retrieved from the safe, MASSAS took a total of approximately \$6,100 in US currency, which he placed in the bookbag. The robbery lasted approximately three (3) minutes before MASSAS left the bank by the rear exit. He left on foot in the direction of the wooded area immediately behind the bank.

Directly east of the bank, on the other side of the wooded area, is Mill Drive, a dead-end residential street. Around the time of the robbery, a witness on Mill Drive (Witness 1) observed a motorcycle parked at the end of the dead-end facing away from the woods. A few minutes later, Witness 1 saw an individual in dark clothing walking along the wood line toward the motorcycle. The individual then dropped something on the ground, got on the motorcycle, and drove quickly away.

From that spot, officers with the Winston Salem Police Department (WSPD) recovered a pair of ripped pink latex gloves. The gloves were consistent with the gloves worn by MASSAS during Robbery 1. One of the gloves was sent to the North Carolina State Crime Lab (NCSCL) for analysis. Sample DNA from three (3) different individuals was found in the glove. The NCSCL would later determine that one of those samples was a match to MASSAS.

While the gloves were still in the process of being tested at the NCSCL, MASSAS robbed the Piedmont Federal Savings Bank located at 2701

Clemmons Road in Clemmons, North Carolina (Robbery 2). On June 13, 2022, MASSAS entered the bank at approximately 10:24 a.m. He was wearing dark clothing, red gloves, and a black bandana style mask with sunglasses that completely obscured his face. He also had on a baseball cap with a distinctive purple pattern on the brim. Just as in Robbery 1, MASSAS again carried a black bookbag and a black handgun.

MASSAS entered the bank and brandished the firearm at the tellers. He demanded money and was given approximately \$5,441 in US currency, which he put into the bookbag. Just before exiting the bank, MASSAS dropped the bookbag, placed the gun in his waistband, then picked up the bag and left the bank on foot. A K9 track led deputies with the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) south but was ultimately terminated due to K9 fatigue and heat.

On December 29, 2022, the NCSCL generated a report concluding that one contributor to the DNA mixture profile obtained from the glove seized in connection with Robbery 1 was a match to a sample on the North Carolina State DNA Database. The match belonged to MASSAS. Due to a similar modus operandi, investigators with WSPD and FCSO believed Robberies 1 and 2 to be perpetrated by the same individual.

On January 6, 2023, MASSAS robbed the Piedmont Federal Savings Bank a second time (Robbery 3). MASSAS entered the bank at approximately 2:23 p.m. He wore a black face mask with a distinctive style that was later

identified as a Magnemask Convertible Mask (pictured below). He wore black pants and, just as in Robbery 1 and Robbery 2, carried a black bookbag and black handgun.



Upon entering the bank, MASSAS brandished the gun at the tellers and demanded money. Both tellers present for Robbery 3 had also been present for Robbery 2. Later, they each told the FCSO they believed that the perpetrator was the same individual as Robbery 2. On this occasion, MASSAS stole approximately \$1,761 in US currency, including some of the bank's bait money¹. MASSAS put the money in the bookbag and started toward the exit. Before leaving the bank, he dropped the bookbag and placed the gun in his waistband. While MASSAS was situating the gun, Teller 1 saw an iPhone with

¹ The bank kept several bills in each register with known serial numbers in the event of a robbery.

a pink case sticking out of his back pocket. MASSAS then picked up the bookbag and left the bank.

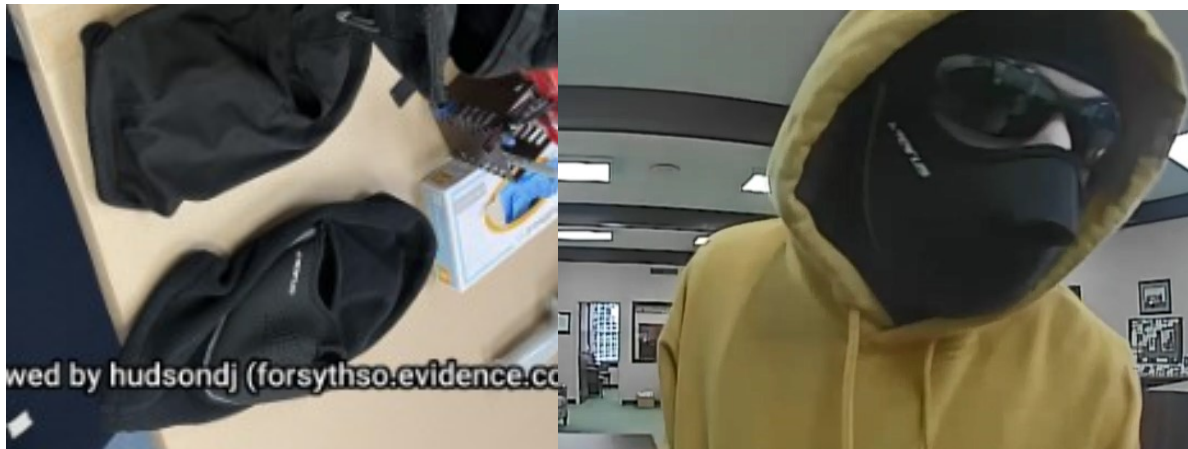
MASSAS left the bank on foot and went south toward 2870 Middlebrook Dr., the Clemmons Civic Club. The Clemmons Civic Club has a back gravel parking lot that is not visible from the roadway and is often unoccupied at that time of day. Later that day, two separate K9 tracks were performed from different starting locations. Both tracks led to the gravel parking lot behind the Clemmons Civic Club and were lost. Both K9 handlers reported that, based on the K9 tracks, they concluded that the bank robber had gotten into a car at that location.

Investigators later learned that MASSAS had clocked out of work on January 6, 2023, approximately fifty minutes before Robbery 3. His car was captured on surveillance footage heading in the direction of Piedmont Federal Savings Bank. The bank is approximately 3.5 miles from MASSAS's place of employment. His car was then seen on surveillance footage approximately twenty minutes before Robbery 3 outside the Vogler & Sons Funeral Home, which is approximately 0.1 mile from the bank. MASSAS' car was seen making an illegal left turn in the direction of the Clemmons Civic Club. MASSAS returned to work and clocked back in approximately twenty minutes after the robbery occurred.

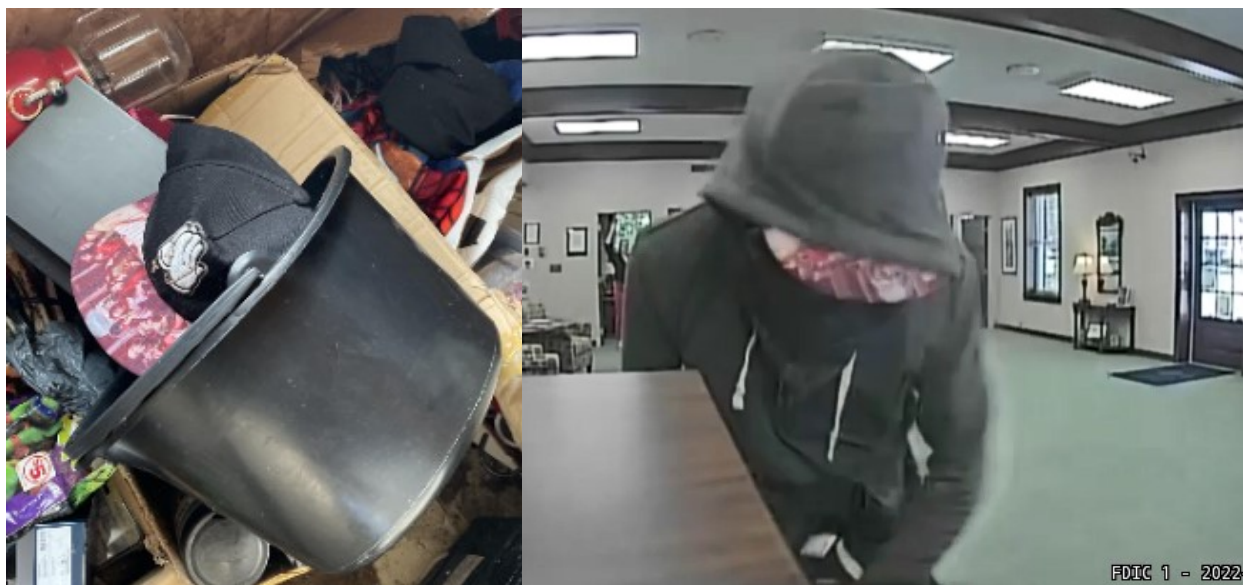
On January 11, 2023, five days after Robbery 3, investigators with WSPD and FCSO met with MASSAS and executed a search warrant to obtain an independent sample of his DNA. The NCSCL would later confirm that the DNA mixture profile obtained from the glove seized from Robbery 1 is 17.3 sextillion times more likely to belong to MASSAS and two unknown, unrelated individuals than if it originated from three unknown, unrelated individuals.

Following the execution of that search warrant, the Yadkin County Probation Office executed a warrantless search of MASSAS's residence, located at 912 W. Lee Avenue, Yadkinville, North Carolina. While probation officers were searching, deputies with FCSO obtained a search warrant for the home and began their own search.

The searches yielded a black polymer handgun under MASSAS's mattress consistent with the gun used in Robbery 3. Additionally, officers located a black bookbag containing several pairs of gloves and a black Seirus Magnemask Convertible Mask consistent with the one MASSAS wore in Robbery 3.



They also located a baseball cap with the same distinctive purple pattern as the hat he wore in Robbery 2 as depicted below.



Further, officers located an iPhone with a pink case, consistent with the one seen by Teller 1 in Robbery 3.

Following the search of MASSAS's residence, deputies obtained a search warrant for the contents of MASSAS's cell phone. On the phone, investigators located a photograph date stamped January 7, 2023, the day after Robbery 3.

The photograph depicts a hand holding a large amount of US currency, several with visible serial numbers. The visible serial numbers match those of the bait money taken from the bank during Robbery 3.

At the time of Robbery 1, First Horizon Bank was a federally insured financial institution insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). At the time of Robberies 2 and 3, Piedmont Federal Savings Bank was a federally insured financial institution insured by the FDIC.

This, the 14th day of June, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on June 14, 2024, the foregoing was electronically filed with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF system, which will send notification of such filing to the following:

Christopher Clifton, Esq.
Michael Grace, Esq.

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